

Message Text

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TO CINCPAC HONOLULU

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EXDIS

HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING IS TEL FROM BANGKOK 19209 DATED DECEMBER 13, 1973
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SINGAPORE, VIENTIANE, CHIANG MAI, UDORN, SONGKHLA, SEOUL,
WELLINGTON, IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 19209

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR, US, TH

SUBJECT: THE SANYA GOVERNMENT AND RECOMMENDED U.S.
POLICY TOWARD IT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. THIS MESSAGE CONSISTS OF THE SUMMARY AND THE PERTINENT
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CONCLUSIONS OF A MUCH LONGER

APPRAISAL OF THE NEW THAI GOVERNMENT. WE ARE

SENDING THE FULL ANALYSIS ON WHICH THESE CONCLUSIONS ARE
BASED IN A SEPARATE TELEGRAM ADDRESSED TO A MORE LIMITED

NUMBER OF POSTS. WE ARE ALSO FORWARDING A SERIES OF SEPARATE TELEGRAMS ANALYZING AND RECOMMENDING U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE INSURGENCY PROBLEM, STUDENTS, NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION, AMERICAN AID, AND OUR GENERAL POSTURE TOWARD THAILAND.

II. SUMMARY

2. THE OCTOBER EVENTS WHICH ENDED THE THANOM GOVERNMENT'S 10 YEAR REIGN HAVE RELEASED TENSIONS AND BROUGHT UNRESOLVED GRIEVANCES TO THE FOREFRONT. THIS NEW ATMOSPHERE AND THE HIGH POPULAR EXPECTATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS UNDERLIE THE CURRENT UNREST IN THAILAND. IN ITS FIRST SEVEN WEEKS IN OFFICE, THE SANYA GOVERNMENT GETS HIGH MARKS FOR ITS INTEGRITY AND PERSONAL QUALITIES, BUT LACKS THE STRONGMAN IMAGE TO WHICH THE THAI ARE ACCUSTOMED, AND WHICH THEIR PATTERNS OF INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP BEHAVIOR PREFER.

3. THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN TOP PRIORITY TO ITS MANDATE TO GUIDE THE COUNTRY TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. BEYOND THIS IT IS WORKING HARD TO RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE NATION'S SECURITY AGENCIES. IT HAS BEGUN TO TAKE STEPS AGAINST PARTICULARLY CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND HAS FROZEN THE ASSETS OF THE THREE OUSTED LEADERS.

4. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT HAS DONE BETTER THAN PROBABLY ANY GOVERNMENT IN THAI HISTORY AT COMMUNICATING ITS THINKING AND ITS ACTIONS TO THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE STUDENTS. IT USES BI-WEEKLY MEET-THE-PEOPLE TELEVISION PROGRAMS AND CANDID NEWS CONFERENCES BY LEADING OFFICIALS.

5. SO FAR THE SANYA GOVERNMENT HAS FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING THE CONSTITUTION AND ARRANGING THE UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. IT IS HESITANTLY TRYING TO GRAPPLE WITH MANY SEVERE MID-TERM ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC ARE URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE MORE VIGOROUSLY TO CORRECT THE MANY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICES
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THAT HAVE PLAGUED THAILAND FOR SO LONG. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO BEEN CRITICIZED FOR NOT IMPOSING SUFFICIENT LAW AND ORDER AND FOR NOT PLACING ENOUGH EMPHASIS ON COUNTERINSURGENCY.

6. DESPITE THESE AND OTHER CRITICISMS, WE BELIEVE THE SANYA ADMINISTRATION WILL REMAIN IN POWER UNTIL ITS SCHEDULED BMMILACEMENT BY AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN THE SUMMER OF 1974. IF LABOR STRIKES GET OUT OF HAND, WE EXPECT THE MILITARY OR THE POLICE TO MOVE IN AND ASSERT A FIRMER AUTHORITY UNDER SANYA'S UMBRELLA, RATHER THAN ARROGATE POWER TO THEMSELVES.

7. BARRING ANY UNTOWARD INCIDENTS, WE ANTICIPATE BEING

ABLE TO MAINTAIN THROUGH MAY 1974 THE MAJOR SHARE OF THE US FORCES CURRENTLY STATIONED IN THAILAND. WE ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER, THAT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONEERING WILL INVOLVE SOME MAJOR POLEMICS AGAINST THE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. END SUMMARY.

III. GOVERNMENT PROSPECTS

8. GIVEN ITS ANNOUNCED SHORT MANDATE AND STRONG DESIRE FOR ITS OWN OBSOLESCENCE, WE ENVISION THAT THE SANYA GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE IN POWER UNTIL THE SUMMER OF 1974. THE CURRENT WAVE OF STRIKES COULD PROVE INCREASINGLY DISRUPTIVE. IF THEY GET OUT OF HAND, WE WOULD EXPECT THE MILITARY, OR PERHAPS THE POLICE, TO MOVE IN TO ASSERT A FIRMER GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY UNDER SANYA'S UMBRELLA RATHER THAN ARROGATING POWER TO THEMSELVES.

9. IF THIS OCCURS A STRONGER SECURITY-MILITARY ELEMENT INVOLVEMENT IN A TEMPORARY GOVERNMENT MAY BE ACCEPTABLE TO STUDENTS AND THE PEOPLE IF THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT REMAINS UNCHANGED. OF COURSE, THIS WOULD ALSO HAVE TO COME WITH THE KING'S BLESSING.

10. WE ALSO EXPECT THAT HIGH POINTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST WILL PERIODICALLY ABSORB THE PRESS AND THOSE OTHER ELEMENTS IN BANGKOK GIVEN TO QUESTIONING BGOVERNMENT POLICIES. THE FIRST HIGH POINT WOULD BE THE PUBLICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION ABOUT JANUARY 15. ENSUING

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PUBLIC DISCUSSION, AND NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEBATE OF THAT DOCUMENT, SHOULD ABSORB PUBLIC ATTENTION FOR MOST OF THE TIME UNTIL PROMULGATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION, ABOUT APRIL 15. THAT WOULD BE THE SECOND HIGH POINT.

11. WHATEVER SLACK IN PUBLIC INTEREST MIGHT OCCUR BETWEEN PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION AND ITS PROMULGATION IN FINISHED FORM SHOULD BE TAKEN UP BY THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING FOR THE NEW ASSEMBLY. BETWEEN APRIL 15 AND THE THIRD HIGH POINT JULY 15, OR WHATEVER DATE IS ULTIMATELY SET FOR THE ELCTIONS, POLITICKING SHOULD BE INTENSE.

12. WHILE WE CANNOT DISCOUNT THE POLITICAL DAMAGE TO SANYA THAT A PROLONGED PUBLIC UTILITIES STRIKE OR MOUNTING INFLATION MIGHT HAVE, WE BELIEVE THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL SURVIVE UNTIL AN ELECTED DEMOCRATIC REGIME REPLACES IT.

13. WE OFFER THE FOREGOING AS THE MOST LIKELY SCENARIO, SINCE IT PROBABLY RESTS ON A TRIANGULAR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE KING, SANYA, AND GENERAL KRIT. THE PLAYING

OUT OF THE SCENARIO, HOWEVER, IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT UPON SANYA CARRYING OUT HIS UNSOUGHT ROLE WITH GREATER VIGOR THAT HE HAS THUS FAR DEMONSTRATED. IF HIS IMAGE OF SELF-EFFACING INEFFECTUALITY SHOULD GROW, THERE ARE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE ARMY THAT MIGHT WISH TO PUT AN END TO THE PRESENT REGIME AND REPLACE IT WITH A MODIFIED MILITARY ONE. WHETHER SUCH A MILITARY BID TO RETURN TO POWER WOULD LEAD TO WIDESPREAD DISORDERS WOULD DEPEND UPON THE MILITARY AVOIDING A DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE KING AND ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION WHICH PROVOKED THE MILITARY MOVE. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THOSE SOURCES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THAILAND OPPOSED TO THE U.S. PRESENCE HERE WILL TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO CAPITALIZE ON THE INTERREGUM PERIOD LYING AHEAD (SEE BELOW).

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

14. BARRING UNUSUAL EVENTS--SUCH AS AN AGGRAVATED INCIDENT INVOLVING AMERICAN FORCES OR SERVICEMEN WITH A THAI
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NATIONAL IN AN ACRIMONIOUS CONFRONTATION THAT THE THAI WOULD INTERPRET AS A DEROGATION OF THEIR SOVEREIGNTY, OR A TIGHTENING ENERGY SQUEEZE GENERATED BY THE ARAB BLOC, THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, OR THE U.S. CONGRESS--WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN UNTIL THE END OF THE DRY SEASON IN MAY 1974 THE MAJOR SHARE OF THE U.S. FORCES CURRENTLY STATIONED IN THAILAND.

15. WHILE PUBLIC PRESSURE AGAINST THE U.S. PRESENCE COULD BUILD UP AS EARLY AS JANUARY, WE SHOULD DEFINITELY
-58:80-53 .-'94 09)3.8: -8-8, 5 5#-5 043 3,:3 -
3)3:589,3348,& ?3:9.3 .943 8,53, 3, PERHAPS ABOUT
MARCH, AND GOES INTO FULL STEAM BY MAY. THE THAI WHO WILL PHRASE THESE ATTACKS WILL MOST LIKELY NOT BE ATTUNED TO THE BALANCE OF POWER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA NOR TO THE THREAT THAT NORTH VIETNAM POSES TO THE REGION. THEY WILL CRITICIZE FOREIGN TROOP PRESENCE AS A SHAMEFUL INDICATION THAT THAILAND IS NOT IN CONTROL OF ITS OWN TERRITORY.

16. THE CONSERVATE ELEMENTS THAT DOMINATE THE SANYA GOVERNMENT HAVE A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING THAN THE PUBLIC OF WHY WE HAVE TROOPS HERE. WE THUS DO NOT ENVISION THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS WILL THEMSELVES INITIATE MAJOR MOVES TO REDUCE THAT PRESENCE, BUT THE GOVERNMENT MAY FEEL COMPELLED TO ACCEDE IN SOME DEGREE TO PUBLIC PRESSURE. UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, MANY OF WHOM THINK THAT IN A SENSE WE PROLONGED THE LIFE OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT BY OUR SUPPORT POLICIES, MAY BECOME MORE VOCAL IN USING THE U.S. AS A WHIPPING BOY. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD STAND BY ITS HISTORICAL AND MORAL OBLIGATION TO FAVOR A FORM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH VESTS POWER IN THE PEOPLE.

IN THE BELIEF THEY ASSUME THAT WE HAVE SOME MEASURE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE MILITARY'S ACTIONS, THEY MAY LOOK TO US TO HELP BLOCK POSSIBLE RETURNS TO A DICTATORIAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

V. US DIPLOMATIC POSTURE

17. WE PLAN TO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN OUR TIES WITH THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S LEADING OFFICIALS, MANY OF WHOM WE HAVE KNOWN WELL FROM THE THANOM ERA. WE WILL BEAR IN MIND THAT MANY INFLUENTIAL THAI MAY VIEW OUR LONG IDENTI-
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FICATION WITH THE THANOM REGIME NEGATIVELY. WE ARE CON-
SEQUENTLY BRANCHING OUT TO EXPAND OUR ACQUAINTANCE WITH A BROADER SPECTRUM OF THAI SOCIETY, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE ACADEMIC AND INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY. WE WILL KEEP OUR LINES OPEN TO STUDENTS, PREFERABLY INDIRECTLY RATHER THAN THROUGH TOO FREQUENT MEETINGS WITH THEM.

18. IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THAI, WE WILL ENCOURAGE THE TREND TOWARD CONSTITUTIONALISM AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, AND, IF ASKED, OFFER ADVICE ON ELECTIONS, THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, AND THE OPERATION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

19. WE ARE TAKING A NUMBER OF STEPS TO BRING U.S. ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND INTO LINE WITH THE NEW SITUATION WE FACE HERE. THESE INCLUDE REORIENTING OUR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, REDUCING TO THE MINIMUM THOSE ASPECTS OF THE U.S. PRESENCE WHICH PROMOTE CRITICISM, AND STEPPING UP OUR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES. THESE WILL BE SPELLED OUT IN DETAIL IN SUBSEQUENT MESSAGES WHICH WILL ADDRESS THE KEY PROBLEM OF HOW WE CAN BEST RESTRUCTURE OUR ACTIVITIES TO PRESERVE WHAT IS VITAL IN THIS COUNTRY WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT TO OUR POSITION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

20. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MEET FREQUENTLY WITH THE THAI TO DISCUSS THE MILITARY SITUATION IN INDOCHINA WITH THE VIEW OF REINFORCING THE CONCLUSION THAT FURTHER WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. COMBAT FORCES WOULD SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THE STABILITY OF THE AREA. WE WILL ARGUE THAT SUCH A REDUCTION AT THIS TIME, WHILE NORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS DURING THE 1973-74 DRY SEASON REMAIN UNCLEAR, COULD LEAD THEM TO MISJUDGE THE U.S. RESOLVE TO RESPOND IF NECESSARY. MEANWHILE REDUCTIONS IN STAFF AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS, AS WELL AS IN DUPLICATIVE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES, CAN LOWER THE U.S. MILITARY PROFILE IN THAILAND, ECONOMIZE ON U.S. EXPENDITURES, AND LAY THESE ROUNDWORK FOR A LONGER TERM U.S. MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH FUTURE THAI GOVERNMENTS.

21. SHOULD INTERNAL PRESSURES DEVELOP IN THAILAND THAT WOULD REQUIRE SOME TOKEN WITHDRAWALS (STATE 240811), WE RECOMMEND THAT WE BE PREPARED TO MAKE AN EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE THAI, OF THE FURTHER WITHDRAWAL

OF UNESSENTIAL NON-STRIKE AIRCRAFT AND THE MEN ASSIGNED WITH
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THEM. WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH A WITHDRAWAL WOULD DEFUSE THE EXPECTED
DEBATE ON U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND, AND ADDITIONALLY
STRENGTHEN THE POSTURE OF THE SANYA GOVERNMENT WHICH COULD POINT
TO ITS FIRST ACHIEVEMENT IN OBTAINING AN OBJECTIVE WHICH MANY
ARTICULATE THAI MAY OTHERWISE SOON BE CLAMORING
FOR. IN THIS WAY, WE COULD PROBABLY RETAIN THE INITIATIVE IN
THE WITHDRAWAL NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS. WE COULD ALSO INSURE THE
STATIONING OF A LARGER NUMBER OF PERSONNEL HERE, AND FOR A LONGER
TIME, THAN IF THE RTG WERE FORCED BY UNASSUAGED PUBLIC OPINION
TO DEMAND FURTHER DRAWDOWNS.

V. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT

22. I REITERATE OUR GENERAL FORECAST THAT THE SANYA
GOVERNMENT WILL MIT THROUGH. NONETHELESS THE HIGHEST
LEVELS IN WASHINGTON SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THAILAND IS
UNDERGOING A UNIQUE AND POTENTIALLY VOLATILE PERIOD IN ITS
HISTORY. FOR THIS REASON, THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE OVERALL
AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THAILAND IS MY MAJOR PERSONAL CONCERN.
THE FUTURE RETENTION OF THE CONSIDERABLE ASSETS THE U.S. HAS
IN THAILAND WILL BE INCREASINGLY DEPENDENT UPON OUR SENSITIVE
ACCOMMODATION TO A DIFFERENT PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE.
KINTNER
UNQUOTE RUSH

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